

Roman Names

by Nicole Wellington

(This is a 15-20 minute activity with possible extension.)

I. Consider these discussion questions:

- What does your name mean to you?
- How do you feel when you see your name written somewhere?
- How do you feel when you see your name or do not see your name on different souvenirs (i.e. keychains, stickers, ornaments)?
- Why do you think people use graffiti to write their names on desks, walls, bridges, etc.?

II. Discuss Roman naming conventions. See attached supplement: *Roman Names and Nomenclature* by Prof. Rebecca R. Benefiel.

- Romans had a different number of names depending on their status (free, freed, slave) and gender (female, male).
- Slaves had a single name. Male citizens might have as many as five parts to their name. Women had between one and three elements for their names.
- Learn more about the *praenomen*, *nomen*, filiation, tribal affiliation, and *cognomen* [here](#).

III. Have students choose a Roman nomen. You can use the list below (or refer to the longer attached list). Students can add on the other pieces of their name, according to whether they have chosen a male or female name.

- Drusilla, Flora, Terentia, Marcella, Scribonia, Valeria, et cetera
- Marcus, Sextus, Cornelius, Iulius, Calpurnius, Clodius, et cetera
- Have students make observations about the endings of the female names and the male names. This can lead to a discussion of gender of Latin nouns.
- For female names, have students discuss why women were defined by their fathers' names. (Roman women did not change their name when they married.)

IV. Check out these graffiti from Herculaneum featuring names.

[CIL IV 10620](#) : Bucolus

[CIL IV 10703](#) : Marcus

[AGP# 156980](#) : Sabina

[CIL IV 10532](#) : Faustus and Nothus

[CIL IV 10655a](#) : Silentiolus, written in the shape of a boat

See if students can figure out what the names are using the alphabet graffiti conventions [here](#). Print this out for students. It would be a great idea to have a laminated (if not laminated, then placed in a plastic protective sleeve) classroom set of these sheets to use for graffiti lessons.

Extension Activity

- When students have chosen their Latin names, have them write their names on the classroom “graffiti wall.” The classroom graffiti wall can be a bulletin board covered with Kraft paper. Have students choose an alphabet from the alphabet conventions sheet and use that alphabet to write their name in black sharpie. It is good for students to make mistakes and cross them out, as this is how it happened with real graffiti. If you have made plaster of Paris pieces for your students, have them scratch their Latin names in with their stylus.

Nomina Romana

Female

- Flora
- Terentia
- Marcella
- Scribonia
- Domitia
- Drusilla
- Valeria
- Agrippina
- Stella
- Cassia
- Sulpicia
- Portia
- Sempronia
- Larentia
- Appia
- Faustina
- Silvia
- Tiberia
- Iunia
- Marcia
- Caecilia
- Licinia
- Alma
- Iulia
- Claudia
- Quintilia
- Lavinia

- Fulvia
- Octavia
- Sabina
- Pompeia
- Cornelia
- Aurelia
- Paulina
- Camilla
- Lucia
- Pomponia
- Calpurnia
- Augusta
- Clara
- Aemilia

Male

- Marcus
- Sextus
- Cornelius
- Iulius
- Augustus
- Calpurnius
- Cassius
- Claudius
- Cloelius
- Domitius
- Ennius
- Fabius

- Fabricius
- Aemilius
- Antonius
- Appius
- Fulvius
- Gellius
- Horatius
- Iunius
- Iuventius
- Lucius
- Lavinius
- Laelius
- Livius
- Lucretius
- Marius
- Mucius
- Memmius
- Naevius
- Octavius
- Ovidius
- Petronius
- Plinius
- Pompeius
- Rufius
- Silvius
- Terentius